



OPINION

Phil's Findings: A sad situation -- Fontana Adult School is cut from the budget

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Unhappily, our Fontana School Board recently cut the Fontana Adult School operation from its budget for the 2011-2012 school year.

I know the board members didn't want to do it. They are also hoping that funding will be found to reinstate Adult Ed, which has been part of Fontana's educational system since Chaffey started it for us in 1952. We took over when we divorced from Chaffey in 1956.

In that first year, among the popular classes were English for the Foreign Born (now ESL) and Citizenship. Students came from Yugoslavia with its divided languages, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Spain, France, and even one adult from Canada.

The citizenship class was the way to learn important facts about United States history, take constant quizzes, learn the Pledge of Allegiance, the lyrics and melody to the Star Spangled Banner, and get ready for the oral examination by the government examiner. They all passed and received their certificates of citizenship with hundreds of others in a special ceremony. There has always been a citizenship class in the Fontana Adult School, year after year. Hundreds have become citizens because of our program.

Emotional moments arise regarding the citizenship prep.

An elderly former student met me at Kaiser Permanente, where she was a patient and I was a volunteer. She took my hand and raised it to her lips. "You made me a citizen!" she sobbed. What a "thank you."

The subjects taught at our Adult School are courses leading to a high school diploma, GED preparation, established electives, and other courses which reflect the interest of our local residents. One such course was the popular guitar class with a leading local guitarist and vocalist.

Many classes are vocational in nature. Some careers start with Adult Ed classes.

When immigrants arrived in New York, many of them landed in the Lower East Side of the Borough of Manhattan. Feeling handicapped because of a lack of English, many of them attended the local Night School, as Adult Ed was called in those days. It made a difference. Many well-known personages used to live there.

Here, in Fontana, there is a graduation ceremony every year, with School Board members present at the event and shaking hands with the new graduates from High School or GED.

With the possible disappearance of Adult School, we must think of other ways to offer classes for Fontana adults. One way is to confer with leaders in the City of Fontana Community Services Department regarding their present offerings in a great variety of areas which would appeal to Fontana residents who have been former Adult Ed students, and others.

That department prints booklets listing its many offerings.

In the meantime, the School Board members are searching for ways to raise the funding necessary to put the district back in a more desirable status.

Does Gov. Jerry Brown know that one of our vocational high school students once had his picture taken with President Reagan? That ought to be worth something.